

POLICY 301-2

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS

The Department of Education shall design school facilities that create smaller communities of learners. For existing schools with high enrollments, the state office and school staff shall analyze their school performance indicators to determine if the school size is negatively affecting student achievement. If student achievement is found to be negatively affected, school staff and community members shall identify and implement educational programs that create smaller communities of learners.

To foster greater personalization established through educational programming and smaller communities of learners while providing flexibility when planning schools for new communities, design enrollment guidelines for new schools shall be:

Elementary (preK-5)	400 to 750 students	8 to 15 usable acres
Middle (6-8)	500 to 1,000 students	15 to 20 usable acres
High (9-12)	800 to 1,600 students	45 to 55 usable acres

In existing urban areas where the availability of land is limited to infill sites and where new housing developments require the construction of new school facilities, design enrollment guidelines for new schools shall be:

Elementary (preK-5)	400 to 750 students	2.5 to 3 usable acres
Middle (6-8)	500 to 1,000 students	5 to 6 usable acres
High (9-12)	800 to 1,600 students	8 to 10 usable acres

The Department shall make every effort to ensure that all educational needs are met when designing and siting new urban-based school facilities. Where possible, the Department should seek design solutions that create environments conducive to creating communities of learners in urban areas.

The Department shall make the final determination as to whether land is usable based on an evaluation of the specific property taken in the context of the development as a whole. Usable is generally defined as land free of encumbrances determined to be unnecessary by the Department, slope of five percent or less, and with no ravines or streambeds. Usable land for the construction of new school facilities with usable acres or enrollment other than established in these design enrollment guidelines shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Education.

Rationale: Research studies show that a larger student enrollment may depersonalize the school environment, thereby negatively affecting student attitude, behavior, and academic achievement.

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